

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 2810

EXDIS NOFORN

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR XF IT IS EG US

SUBJECT: ITALIAN PROPOSAL ON MIDDLE EAST

REF: ROME 2759; ROME 2732; TEL AVIV 2694

1. REFTELS DESCRIBE ITALIAN FONMIN MEDICI' S PROPOSALS WHICH HE BELIEVES WILL CONTRIBUTE TO BREAKING MID EAST IMPASSE. WE RECOGNIZE THAT MEDICI' S BASIC IDEA THAT SUBSTANTIAL WESTERN ECONOMIC AID PACKAGE CAN CONTRIBUTE TO AREA STABILITY AND HELP PREPARE GROUND FOR POLITICAL SETTLEMENT IS NOT RPT NOT AN ENTIRELY NEW CONCEPT. HOWEVER, WE BELIEVE MEDICI' S IDEAS HAVE BEEN ADVANCED IN GENUINE SPIRIT OF TRYING TO BE HELPFUL AND IN LINE WITH USG ENCOURAGEMENT TO ITALIANS AND OTHERS TO COME UP WITH PROPOSALS WHICH COULD MOVE SITUATION OFF DEAD CENTER. IN ADDITION MEDICI HAS BROUGHT HIS PROPOSALS TO USG FOR CONSIDERATION, AS REQUESTED BY AMBASSADOR DURING RECENT CONVERSATIONS ON SUBJECT, RATHER THAN LAUNCHING THEM AS AN INDEPENDENT INITIATIVE. IN LIGHT OF THESE FACTORS, WE RECOMMEND THAT DEPT GIVE CAREFUL CONSIDERATION TO MEDICI' S PROPOSALS, PERHAPS SOLICITING VIEWS OF MORE DIRECTLY CONCERNED POSTS. MEDICI WILL EXPECT US RESPONSE DURING HIS FORTHCOMING VISIT TO WASHINGTON WITH PM ANDREOTTI, AND WE HOPE THAT SECRETARY PROVIDE AT LEAST TENTATIVE USG REACTION DURING HIS TALKS WITH MEDICI AT THAT TIME.

2. THERE ARE OBVIOUSLY A NUMBER OF ELEMENTS OF ITALIAN SELF- INTEREST INCLUDED IN MEDICI PROPOSALS. FONMIN UNDERSTANDABLY LAYS EMPHASIS ON MEDITERRANEAN SECURITY BY EXPRESSING CONCERN THAT IF MID EAST SITUATION CONTINUES TO DRIFT, FURTHER STRENGTHENING OF SOVIET
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PRESENCE IN AREA AND SOVIET FLEET IN MEDITERRANEAN IS LIKELY. FURTHER, ITALIANS HAVE MAJOR INTEREST FOR ECONOMIC/ COMMERCIAL REASONS IN EARLY REOPENING OF SUEZ CANAL, AND ALSO HAVE THEIR EYE ON COMMERCIAL PIECE OF THE ACTION IN REHABILITATION OF CANAL AND ENVIRONS. IN ADDITION, GOI HAS BEEN HANKERING TO SHOW SOME ITALIAN INSPIRED MOTION ON MID EAST PROBLEM FOR THE BENEFIT OF ITALIAN PUBLIC OPINION, AND RESULTING CREDIT WHICH COULD ACCRUE TO PRESENT GOVERNMENT.

3. WE AGREE WITH MEDICI' S ASSESSMENT THAT ITALY' S EC PARTNERS LACK ENTHUSIASM FOR COURSE OF ACTION SUGGESTED BY MEDICI. MOREOVER, WE SEE CONTRADICTIONS IN MEDICI' S ASSESSMENT OF ISREALI ATTITUDE TOWARD THIS PLAN. IN ONE INSTANCE, HE INFORMS US THAT PRIME MINISTER MEIR TOLD HIM SHE COULD NOT RPT NOT BE AGAINST HIS PROPOSALS, WHILE ON THE OTHER HAND HE DESCRIBES, WE BELIEVE WITH ACCURACY, ISRAELI SATISFACTION WITH THE STATUS QUO. MEDICI' S ASSUMPTION THAT ISRAELIS WILL EASILY AGREE TO LIMITED WITHDRAWAL FROM EAST BANK OF CANAL APPEARS TO US OPEN TO QUESTION. WE ALSO NOTE TEL AVIV' S COMMENT THAT ISRAELIS REGARD MEDICI' S PROPOSALS AS " RATHER ZANY". FINALLY, WE HAVE NO ASSESSMENT FROM MEDICI CONCERNING ATTITUDES EGYPTIANS MAY HAVE TAKEN TOWARD HIS SUGGESTIONS, ALTHOUGH MEDICI ESTIMATES POSITIVE EGYPTIAN RESPONSE WOULD BE DIFFICULT. HIS ASSUMPTION THAT LARGE- SCALE FINANCING WOULD BE READILY AVAILABLE APPEARS QUESTIONABLE.

4. IN SUM, MEDICI' S SUGGESTIONS, THOUGH FLAWED IN CERTAIN ASPECTS, WERE SERIOUSLY OFFERED, AND FOR THIS REASON WE BELIEVE THEY WARRANT A CONSIDERED RESPONSE. VOLPE

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